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FM SECSTATE WASHDC
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INFO DEPT OF ENERGY WASHINGTON DC

UNCLAS STATE 185727

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TEXT RECEIVED FROM DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PARM](#) [KNNP](#) [MNUC](#) [KZ](#)
SUBJECT: BN-350 SENIOR POLICY WORKING GROUP PROPOSAL

REF: A. STATE 185480

[1](#)B. COONEY-O'MARA E-MAILS

[1](#)1. THIS IS AN ACTION REQUEST. See Para. 3 and 4.

SUMMARY: The USG would like to begin discussions with the Government of Kazakhstan on permanent disposition of Kazakhstan's BN-350 spent nuclear fuel. The USG proposes that the first formal discussion on options for permanent disposition be held in Kazakhstan in December 2006. Post is requested to deliver the letter in para 4 to the Minister of Energy and Mineral Resources proposing the December meeting.

[1](#)2. BACKGROUND: The USG is working with Kazakhstan on the safe and secure storage of spent fuel from the BN-350 fast breeder reactor in Aktau. The joint BN-350 Spent Fuel Program has packaged 300 metric tons (MT) of spent fuel containing 10 MT of HEU and 3 MT of plutonium into canisters and plans to move the spent fuel into dry storage in large, proliferation resistant casks at a long-term storage facility at the Baikal-1 site.

Building on current cooperation, Secretary of Energy Bodman and President Nursultan Nazarbayev agreed to begin discussions on permanent disposition of the spent fuel during a meeting in Washington, DC on September 28, 2006. Cable released by Department of State (reftel) outlined verbal demarche to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources for first approach on policy group by Embassy Astana. The USG proposes that a senior-level policy meeting be held in December 2006 in Kazakhstan to begin discussions on cooperative efforts regarding permanent disposition. Specifically, this senior-level meeting would establish terms of reference that sets the framework for discussions on bilateral cooperation for possible permanent disposition. The senior-level policy meeting would also create a bilateral technical working group to explore the bilateral cooperation and technical feasibility, costs, and schedule associated with various permanent disposition options. The technical working group would report its findings to the senior-level policy group. Ideally, the first meeting of the technical working group would be in the January-February 2007 timeframe following the senior-level meetings so as not to lose positive momentum.

[1](#)3. ACTION REQUEST: To follow up on the Bodman-Nazarbayev agreement to begin discussion of permanent disposition of the BN-350 spent fuel with a meeting in early-mid December, action addressees are requested to deliver the following letter to the Minister of Energy and Mineral Resources; with a copy, released as appropriate, to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

[1](#)4. BEGIN TEXT OF LETTER:

Minister Izmukhambetov

Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources
of the Republic of Kazakhstan

Dear Minister Izmukhambetov:

I am writing to follow up on the productive discussion between U.S. Secretary of Energy Samuel Bodman and President Nursultan Nazarbayev of the Republic of Kazakhstan on September 28, 2006 in Washington, DC.

One of the items that Secretary Bodman and President Nazarbayev discussed was the BN-350 spent fuel program. This program has had a very successful year, meeting both of its major milestones to start construction of the Aktau Temporary Cask Storage Facility and to begin fabrication of storage casks. The United States remains fully committed to this program and we are beginning to work on the Baikal-1 long-term storage phase of the project.

Building on this cooperation, Secretary Bodman and President Nazarbayev agreed to begin discussions on possible bilateral cooperation for the permanent disposition of Kazakhstan's BN-350 spent nuclear fuel. To begin this effort, I would like to propose that a bilateral senior-level policy meeting be held in December 2006. Specifically, I envision that this senior-level policy meeting would establish a mutually agreed terms of reference that sets the framework for discussions on permanent disposition. The senior-level policy meeting could create a bilateral technical working group to explore the technical feasibility, costs, and schedule associated with permanent disposition. The technical working group would report its findings to the senior-level policy group. I suggest that the first meeting of the technical working group take place in the January-February 2007 timeframe after the December 2006 senior-level meetings so as not to lose positive momentum.

I would like to suggest that the senior-level policy group meeting on permanent disposition be held in Kazakhstan in early to mid December. I am appointing William Tobey, the Deputy Administrator for Defense Nuclear Nonproliferation, as the U.S. Head of Delegation for the December meeting. Representatives from the U.S. State Department and the U.S. Embassy in Kazakhstan will also participate in our interagency senior-level meeting. I look forward to working with you closely as we begin discussions on permanent disposition options and hope to receive a positive response to our proposal to meet in December.

Sincerely,

Linton F. Brooks
Administrator
National Nuclear Security Administration
United States Department of Energy
RICE